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PUBLIC COMMENTS - PINE ISLAND - 6:30 - MAY 5, 2010

In the Matter of the Application by Xcel Energy for a
Route Permit for the Hampton-Rochester-La Crosse 345 kV
Transmission Line Project

PUC Docket Number: E002/TL-09-1448

May 5, 2010

American Legion
108 1st Avenue Southeast
Pine Island, Minnesota

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1 MR. LANGAN: Okay. So we'll open it up
2 for comments and/or questions. And again, what I'll
3 ask that you do is just come up to the microphone in
4 front. It makes it easier for the court reporter to
5 get your information down. What we ask is that you
6 state your name when you come up and then spell your
7 name as well, so we can jot that down and not mangle
8 the spelling of the name. And we'll ask that folks
9 speak one at a time up here. And what else?
10 Anything else? Okay.

11 And the way we'll handle this is I do
12 have some speakers who have registered on the
13 speaker cards. I'll call out those folks first.
14 And then after that we'll just go by a show of hands
15 and make sure that everybody gets their comments in
16 and their questions answered.

17 Also, if you're not able to come up to
18 the front to speak at the mic, you can just let us
19 know that. We can bring a cordless mic, if you're
20 not able to come up.

21 Connie. Connie Rude.

22 MS. RUDE: Connie Rude. R-U-D-E.

23 MR. LANGAN: One second. Is that not on?

24 MS. RUDE: Connie Rude. R-U-D-E.

25 My question is -- and it pertains to a

1 lot of what you said when you started off. I live
2 in that little section, that little jog coming down
3 off from 52. And we're talking about aesthetics and
4 we're talking about crossing the river. Now, when
5 we talked about coming down from Cannon Falls,
6 you're talking about a linear line, and then you get
7 to Zumbrota and you jog off from that line. And you
8 said the reason that you're not doing it in Cannon
9 Falls is -- crossing the river, but you're also
10 making another river crossing right there on the
11 Zumbro, coming to the west side of Highway 52.

12 Where we live, we worked really hard to
13 become certified organic. So the land you're
14 crossing is certified organic. My son -- son-in-law
15 and daughter built a house and you're only going to
16 be a very few feet because they're not far from that
17 half section line.

18 The hill that you're going to cross is
19 one that we use for sledding. There's been no
20 farming on that hill for as long as we've owned the
21 farm, which is over 20 years. We like to call it
22 our nature preserve. It's really going to be not
23 very pleasant to look at a gigantic utility pole on
24 the top of that hill.

25 The other thing is there's rimland down

1 below. So you're also crossing rim property. It
2 just makes no sense that for that little jog you're
3 going to cross farmland. Plus, there are -- it's
4 zoned A3, so there are three 35-acre building sites
5 still available. Not that we're going to sell it,
6 but that really impacts the saleability of that
7 property. We also already have a transmission line
8 going on Highway 60 to the south of us. And one to
9 the west of us would be way too much.

10 Thank you for your time.

11 MR. LANGAN: Thank you.

12 I believe it's Don Heller.

13 MS. HELLER: Hi, my name is Don Heller,
14 H-E-L-L-E-R. I have, actually, five points I would
15 like to touch on.

16 Thank you for your explanation of the
17 costing models and so on. I was a little confused
18 by one of the maps. It appeared when you leave Pine
19 Island, that you kind of wander on the alternative
20 route south, you kind of wander around out in the
21 middle of -- I'm not sure why you do that, but kind
22 of takes some jogs to the west and south, kind of a
23 box shaped line there, as opposed to just following
24 the trail directly. So I just -- a question about
25 that.

1 The other major one is -- and I
2 understand that if somehow the proposed route was to
3 move from in front of my home to the front of
4 somebody else's home, I would be happier, they would
5 be sadder, I understand that part. But I'm on the
6 intersection of 90th Street and 60th Avenue. And
7 there are two old buildings there. The home I live
8 in is 112 years old, probably one of the oldest
9 homes in that area. Across the street, about 110
10 feet away, is a schoolhouse that was converted to a
11 home. That's about 90 years old. And right now
12 the -- there's an existing power line that goes
13 through, there but it jogs across the road from my
14 place and above the schoolhouse.

15 I'm a little concerned about an 80-foot
16 easement in there somewhere. You take the road out
17 of the way, there's no 80 feet in there. You're
18 going to have to move one or both of those homes.
19 They are historic, as I mentioned earlier.

20 The other comment I would like to make is
21 at some point have we ever considered something like
22 they do in building? Where you create a wiring
23 closets where you put your stuff. We all know that
24 transmission lines have to exist. We all know that
25 they're necessary. I use electricity. Everyone in

1 this room uses electricity. We don't begrudge that
2 idea at all. But is there any way that you could
3 come up with a -- instead of this project-by-project
4 attack, come up with a way to say, look, we're going
5 to have -- this is the area. Perhaps following
6 something like Highway 52, perhaps following
7 something like the Douglas Trail.

8 The -- it's a bit of a pipe dream, but
9 there's going to be a high speed rail discussed.
10 There's a right-of-way for that. There's things
11 that could be combined very easily. And instead of
12 having unfortunate changes for people multiple
13 times, you're kind of cutting the dog's tail off an
14 inch at a time.

15 The other thing I would like to know is
16 who are on the advisory task force? Who are the
17 members for the advisory task force for this area?
18 That's my last comment. So if you can provide that,
19 that would be fantastic.

20 Thank you for your time.

21 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Okay. Thank you for
22 the comments. To answer the last question there,
23 the advisory task force members, we do have the
24 structure in charge of that task force, what they're
25 charged with doing and how that task force is

1 structured, along with the names and their
2 affiliations on our web site. So again, if we look
3 at our web site and go to this project page, there
4 will be a listing of each of those individuals that
5 has committed their time to participate on the task
6 force. So we do have that available for folks'
7 review.

8 MS. HELLER: Thank you.

9 MR. LANGAN: Okay. And it's either Beau
10 or Kate Kennedy.

11 MR. KENNEDY: I'm not Katie. Beau
12 Kennedy, K-E-N-N-E-D-Y.

13 We -- my wife and I and two kids own ten
14 acres on the alternate route in Mazeppa Township on
15 Route 16. We're currently building our first home
16 on that ten acres. And it just so happens the
17 garage we put up last week is within 30 feet of the
18 proposed centerline and our house is within 200
19 feet. I just wanted to point out that those
20 structure are not on that original scoping document
21 that was submitted previously, as well as a few
22 other of our neighbors' homes.

23 Now, we also -- just have a couple
24 comments here. We'd also appreciate, during the
25 environmental review process of the alternate route

1 line, that a complete -- like a native vegetation
2 survey be completed on our property and the
3 properties adjacent to the proposed north route
4 crossing of the river. We are aware of a few rare
5 and unique plant communities that do exist on that
6 route.

7 We would also like to mention that a new
8 utility crossing across the north Zumbro River would
9 have a negative effect on wildlife and eco tourism
10 in the area. In November of 2008 the citizens of
11 Minnesota voted yes for a sales tax, taxing
12 themselves to help protect our water and wildlife
13 habitat in Minnesota. I would bet that if we put
14 this route up to a plan -- or put this routing plan
15 up for a vote, the majority of our taxpayers in
16 Minnesota would vote for this land to follow
17 existing utility corridors and disturb as little
18 virgin ground as possible.

19 That is what we request: Use existing
20 road and utility corridors and not put scars across
21 our wooded bluff lands and valleys forever.

22 Thank you for your time.

23 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Thank you for your
24 comments. And that raises a good point. If -- if
25 folks are looking at maps either here tonight or

1 they're looking at maps on our web site or in the
2 permit application at the libraries and you see that
3 your home or certain structures are not represented
4 on there, that is information that we need, that --
5 if that's been missed.

6 So I appreciate you raising that point.
7 And that's one part of the thing that we're out here
8 for tonight, if there's anything that's inaccurate
9 about the maps that are out there, please let us
10 know so that we can consider that in our review.

11 That was it for the registered speakers.
12 But we'll make sure that everyone gets an
13 opportunity to speak. This is a good size group
14 here. So I'm going to start by just going for a
15 raise your hand and we'll call you up. And I'll do
16 my best to call on you in order. Please be patient
17 with me.

18 Yes, sir.

19 MR. MACK: My name is Tim Mack, M-A-C-K.
20 I would like to speak to the part on one of your
21 slides where you talked about right-of-way
22 requirements.

23 I guess I would like to see a requirement
24 for liability waivers and an indemnity clause in the
25 easements. When we negotiated an easement with

1 Goodhue County Electric recently for the new
2 industrial park in Zumbrota, those were included. I
3 think they should be automatic. Landowners
4 shouldn't have to come out and ask for them.

5 We do have a large Xcel line that crosses
6 our current property and some of their maintenance
7 contractors have done things which would leave us
8 exposed to potential financial liability. And since
9 most property owners will receive no direct benefit
10 from a new line, they shouldn't be exposed to any
11 liability issues from it either.

12 Thank you.

13 MR. LANGAN: Thank you. Yes, please.

14 MS. ZINK: My name is Therese Zink
15 Z-I-N-K, and I own 20 acres on the alternative
16 route. I live on 195 between 480 and 490. And I
17 have a farmhouse that's 117 years old and also put
18 in three acres of prairie, so that's probably not on
19 your assessment.

20 I'm also a physician and one of the
21 things that I was concerned about was in reviewing
22 this there was no mention of any health assessment.
23 And when you look at the evidence as far as impact
24 on human health and animal health, there's no clear
25 evidence one way or the other, but there's much

1 anecdotal evidence about childhood cancer concerns
2 and also potential health issues for animals, as
3 well. And so there's no discussion of that and I
4 feel like that really needs to be addressed.

5 Secondly, the -- our world is different
6 now. And with this kind of electronic current I
7 have concern about what this is going to do to cell
8 phone service and internet lines and also GPS for
9 farmers who are planting via that, and there's
10 really no discussion of that. Because once the
11 problem is there and the line is up, families have
12 no opportunity to deal with that problem or have any
13 claim.

14 So I also represent a number of the other
15 landowners in my area who signed a petition which I
16 can leave with you.

17 But also, really encouraging you to
18 consider going along the 52. I'm in that part that
19 jogs off 52 and then cuts in, actually goes through
20 my property to head over to Mazeppa. And so would
21 ask that you follow existing power lines or existing
22 highways there.

23 MR. LANGAN: Thank you very much for your
24 comments. In the page of impacts that we propose to
25 study, I probably should read each and every one of

1 those. But public health effects are one thing that
2 we do look at in there, and I realize it wasn't one
3 that I said out loud. So I apologize for that. But
4 that is something we will look at.

5 This is an issue that, as you indicated,
6 has been studied quite a bit. And so we're going to
7 put that information in as part of that
8 environmental impact statement. So thank you for
9 your comment.

10 Okay. Other comments or questions?

11 Yes, please.

12 MR. BJORK: My name is Tim Bjork,
13 B-J-O-R-K.

14 MR. STEVENSON: You have to step really
15 close to the microphone, unfortunately.

16 MR. BJORK: I've heard this talk about
17 the preferred line and the alternate line. And I
18 would like to know what the priorities is -- you
19 know, you choose which way you're going to go, if
20 you know, if you can tell me it's 75 percent the
21 preferred way and 25 percent the other way, that's a
22 number I would kind of like to know.

23 If you can't give me that number, then
24 can you give me some kind of history? Because I'm
25 sure this is not your first project, that you've had

1 these proposals before. In the history of those
2 proposals, can you tell me, you know, it went 75
3 percent on the proposed and 25 percent on the
4 alternate.

5 Thank you.

6 MR. LANGAN: Thank you for that question.
7 And I'll field that one.

8 By state rule the utility is required to
9 provide us with two routes. And they ask -- and the
10 state rule asks that the utility identify one as a
11 preferred route. From that point on those two
12 routes--or in the case around the Zumbro River three
13 routes--are evaluated using the exact same criteria.
14 The same criteria that the Public Utilities
15 Commission uses on evaluating one route is the same
16 criteria they use evaluating another. So from our
17 review perspective there is not a preferred route at
18 that point.

19 Your question that you asked I get a lot.
20 People obviously would like to know, is there a
21 greater chance that one or the other gets approved?
22 And at this point no, there's not. There's not a --
23 it's a 50-50 -- it's a 50-50 chance right now. And
24 the reason for that is because we haven't developed
25 our record in the review yet. We need to go in and

1 verify the information that the utility has
2 provided. We need to look at available studies and
3 information that's out there to review. We need to
4 gather input from you as to what's important; was a
5 house missed along the way, was a building missed
6 along the way. And until that record is fully
7 developed, we place no value judgment on which route
8 is superior. We're going to evaluate those equally.

9 And so some people get frustrated by that
10 answer. They like me to be able to give a more
11 specific answer. But that's the very reason why I
12 can't. We need to develop that record, we need to
13 study these routes. And while one is called
14 preferred and one is called alternate, in our review
15 and in the Public Utility Commission's review -- or
16 view, right now they are equal. They're going to be
17 evaluated under the same criteria.

18 So thank you for asking that question.
19 It gave me an opportunity to say that.

20 MR. BJORK: What about the history,
21 though, of other proposed?

22 MR. LANGAN: The history of these
23 projects, I can't give you a percent on whether, you
24 know, like you were suggesting, 75 percent of the
25 time a preferred route gets approved. Frankly, by

1 the end of this process it may not be that those are
2 the only -- those two routes might not look exactly
3 like that. There may be additional route segments
4 we're going to look at, there may be longer
5 stretches of routes that are.

6 So while, yes, sometimes a preferred
7 route is ultimately selected because it reduces the
8 impacts, you know, more so than other routes, there
9 can be -- you know, the alternate routes sometimes
10 reduces the impact. Modified versions of either the
11 preferred or the alternate could be what is
12 ultimately -- what is ultimately approved.

13 So by the time that the Public Utility
14 Commission -- Utilities Commission is making that
15 determination, it might look slightly or quite
16 different from what's proposed right now.

17 In the back.

18 MR. THEDENS: I'm Mike Thedens. I have a
19 farm, 160 acres of century farm in Farmington
20 township, in section 9.

21 MR. LANGAN: I'm sorry to interrupt you.
22 I didn't --

23 MR. STEVENSON: You have to step really
24 close to the microphone.

25 MR. THEDENS: Okay. I live in

1 Farmington, Section 9, and with a 160-acre farm
2 there. And it's a century farm so it's been in my
3 family for 150 years. And some of the concerns that
4 I have is that my parents, they weren't able to make
5 it tonight, but they live -- they have an 80-acre
6 farm directly north of mine and the power lines
7 that -- for the preferred route in that spot is
8 where you're looking at making the jog going from
9 east to west and north and south.

10 And for my parents, they're 80 years old
11 and they're going to be looking at possibly retiring
12 soon here in the near -- I mean, possibly selling it
13 to me, being somebody in their family, or maybe even
14 selling it, if they decide to move to town or
15 something. Land values are a pretty important piece
16 of that because they're getting affected on two
17 sides of their property, which is 50 percent of the
18 perimeter of their land. Can't believe that doesn't
19 have a big impact on the property value of that 80
20 acres, especially when in the township there 80
21 acres is what you have to have for a building site.

22 That's one concern. The other concern
23 with the property values and how it affects that
24 would be also there's a good chance that I would
25 probably retain ownership of that, possibly, in the

1 future, or maybe one of my children. So that impact
2 on that property value is going to have an impact,
3 even if it isn't for my folks, it could be for my
4 family, whether it's myself or my kids.

5 Another question, thing I had here, too.
6 I noticed tonight you handed out the flowchart here
7 showing the process. But the one you had in the
8 PowerPoint presentation, it was slightly different.
9 Curious if that PowerPoint presentation is available
10 online so a person can see all the breakdown of that
11 flowchart?

12 The other thing, too, on advisory board,
13 how do they work? Besides getting the listing of
14 those people, what is their role? And as far as us
15 contacting them, sharing our concerns or whatever,
16 what is their role in the process of that?

17 MR. LANGAN: Okay. The answer to one of
18 the questions is: Is the process diagram that was
19 shown on the screen tonight available on our web
20 site? And yes, it is, it's available. If you go to
21 our main page, which we had the web link up before
22 and it's on your documentation here, if you go to
23 that page and you click on transmission lines, there
24 will be a full process diagram and an alternate
25 process diagram.

1 Click on the full review process diagram.
2 That's the process that we use to evaluate a line of
3 this length and this capacity. That's the 12-month
4 review. And so that process diagram is there, along
5 with all sorts of other information that's helpful.

6 I can't stump for the web site enough, if
7 you do have web access. And so that is available.
8 But again, make sure you're clicking on the full
9 process diagram, as opposed to the alternative
10 process.

11 In terms of the advisory task force, your
12 question about that, first of all, I can explain how
13 we -- how we go about assembling that advisory task
14 force and then talk about the involvement and
15 their -- how they're involved with their
16 constituents, if you will. Every township, city, or
17 county that either the preferred or alternate line
18 of either the 345 or the 161 kilovolt line--so every
19 local unit of government--received a solicitation
20 letter asking for their participation, explaining
21 the structure and charge of the task force and what
22 the time commitment would be along with that.

23 We also followed that up with e-mails,
24 e-mail communications to all those government units.
25 And we followed that up, in fact, with phone calls

1 afterwards. So we -- so any township or county or
2 city that any of these proposals pass through
3 receive that information.

4 Also, in addition to the local government
5 units, we go out and solicit membership from
6 non-governmental organizations. So this could be
7 environmental groups, this could be chambers of
8 commerce, a whole host, I guess, of non-governmental
9 organizations. So -- and those same folks receive
10 the solicitation letters and e-mails and phone
11 calls.

12 It is a time commitment. We do ask
13 for -- for this group to attend meetings, we ask for
14 this group to do homework, we ask for this group to
15 put together and review their report that ultimately
16 comes out and gets considered in the scoping
17 process. So it's a time commitment.

18 Understandably, some folks weren't able
19 to make that time commitment. Other folks chose, I
20 guess, maybe to participate in the process another
21 way, and then the members that are on the task force
22 chose to make that time commitment and participate.

23 At our first meeting -- at our first
24 meeting we talked about issues and impacts, just
25 like we're talking about tonight. At our second

1 meeting we talked about route alternatives and route
2 segment alternatives. And at the third meeting we
3 tied that all together and the group, with the help
4 of a facilitator, puts together a final report to us
5 on what those issues are and what those alternatives
6 are of priority to the group.

7 We do talk to the group at that first
8 meeting about that we encourage them -- and by
9 nature when it's local government folks they realize
10 they have a constituency and they're representing a
11 large group of people, same thing with the
12 non-governmental organizations. So we encourage
13 them to go out and seek input from their
14 constituencies and to bring that to the table, to
15 make contacts with the people in their area,
16 understand what their priorities and interests are
17 and to really bring those to the table and have
18 that -- have that broad view, have that broad view
19 within, whether it's the township, whether it's the
20 city, whether it's the countywide view, or whether
21 it's the representation for their organization, and
22 really to bring that to the table. They are to
23 represent -- represent their constituency at the
24 table.

25 Does that answer your question, sir?

1 MR. THEDENS: Thank you.

2 MR. LANGAN: Sorry. Looking to the back
3 of the room. Please.

4 MR. WALTERS: My name is Steve Walters,
5 W-A-L-T-E-R-S. I live in New Haven Township,
6 Section 11. I believe the biggest environmental
7 impact is the proximity, closeness to our homes and
8 dwellings, bar everything else. We spend 89 percent
9 of our time there, and I think that should be
10 avoided at all costs putting in this power line.

11 That's all I got to say.

12 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Thank you.

13 Other comments or questions? Sir.

14 MR. LYSTROM: My name is Wayne Lystrom,
15 L-Y-S-T-R-O-M. I am -- I live in the Roscoe
16 Township, in Section 5. I have several items. I
17 don't know if I can get them answered right away or
18 whatever. I know Tom knows some of this because
19 he's answered it.

20 The towers, how tall are they that you're
21 proposing? Do you want to answer them now or should
22 I just get them all down?

23 MR. HILLSTROM: Well, if I answer them as
24 you go, I don't have to remember the questions.

25 MR. LYSTROM: Exactly.

1 MR. HILLSTROM: The towers can range in
2 height from 130 to 170 feet. On average they would
3 be about 150 feet tall.

4 MR. LYSTROM: Okay. How far between each
5 one?

6 MR. HILLSTROM: The distance between one
7 tower and the next would be in the neighborhood of
8 1,000 feet.

9 MR. LYSTROM: Next: Format. If I check
10 yes on the -- to get information, will you not send
11 me paper copies? Or do you -- I want the paper
12 copy, but I want the electronic copy also.

13 MR. LANGAN: Okay.

14 MR. LYSTROM: So if I check yes, does
15 that eliminate paper?

16 MR. LANGAN: If you -- if you check yes,
17 we'll -- it will eliminate paper. We won't send you
18 a full hard copy of the draft environmental impact
19 statement. And I should point that out. It would
20 not be our intent to send that full document in hard
21 copy to everyone on our mailing list. Our first
22 priority is to have that available online and
23 paperless, if we can. We will have paper hard
24 copies at libraries and upon special requests. But
25 we have -- we have quite the mailing list for this

1 and the expense, both in cost and to the paper
2 printing of that is -- we hope we can do paperless
3 copies, if possible.

4 MR. LYSTROM: Okay. The next one is for
5 Tom. Can you tell me the cost difference generally
6 between alternative and the preferred? Just rough.

7 MR. HILLSTROM: I'm going to -- I'm going
8 to -- I can't answer that question because I have a
9 real hard time remembering numbers.

10 Grant, did you hear the question?

11 MR. STEVENSON: Which?

12 MR. LYSTROM: The cost difference between
13 the preferred -- or the cost difference between
14 option one and option two.

15 MR. STEVENSON: Of which line?

16 MR. LYSTROM: The 345.

17 MR. STEVENSON: From?

18 MR. LYSTROM: Hampton to the substation.

19 MR. STEVENSON: I'll get that for you.

20 MR. LYSTROM: Okay. The next thing is
21 for -- and I'm sorry it's going back and forth, but
22 just a suggestion: Just in the naming, maybe they
23 should have option one and option two instead of
24 preferred because what happens for us is when we see
25 a preferred or alternate, it changes our mindset.

1 So probably one of the most important
2 things I forgot was there is a missing structure on
3 your diagram on the southwest corner of my property,
4 47628 135th Avenue, Zumbrota.

5 MR. LANGAN: Did you get that?

6 MR. LYSTROM: She's good.

7 Can you tell me how many members on the
8 task force?

9 MR. LANGAN: I can. On the -- the task
10 force that's focusing on the area from Hampton to
11 northern Rochester, if you will, there are nine
12 members on that task force. On the task force that
13 focuses on the substation and the Pine Island,
14 Zumbrota area out to the Mississippi River, there's
15 seven members on that task force.

16 And I appreciate you bringing that up.
17 And this was the other part that I forgot to include
18 in the other question: Every local government unit
19 and non-governmental organization that applied to be
20 on the task force is on the task force.

21 MR. LYSTROM: Thank you. Now, for Grant,
22 I'm wondering if you can tell me the numerical
23 rating between the preferred and the alternate
24 route? Because you guys, Xcel, do a different way
25 of deciding. So I guess I'm trying to figure out,

1 can you give me the number that you came up with, I
2 guess.

3 MR. STEVENSON: I'm not sure what you
4 mean by numerical ratings. Maybe you can explain it
5 a different way?

6 MR. LYSTROM: What they said earlier in
7 the conversation or in the presentation is you gave
8 them -- determining the route, there's a scientific
9 way of determining it. And without knowing the
10 scientificness -- scientific -- yeah, I guess, I
11 don't know, whatever the word is, write the right
12 one in there. Can you tell me the difference
13 between them?

14 MR. STEVENSON: Tom is going to explain
15 that. Your previous question, from Hampton to north
16 Rochester, the preferred route we estimate to be
17 \$88 million, the alternate 101.

18 MR. HILLSTROM: Answer the question about
19 the scientificness.

20 MR. LYSTROM: That's the word.

21 MR. HILLSTROM: Well, in our permit
22 application, we have lots of tables. And those
23 tables compare the different routes with numerical
24 values for the different criteria. So there's not a
25 single number that gets summarized for each route,

1 but instead there are various criteria, categories
2 that get summed up. So the best answer is to take a
3 look at the permit application and look at the
4 tables.

5 MR. LYSTROM: Thank you. For Matt: Do
6 you guys use that same grading period or numerical
7 rating when you guys look at it, or do you guys use
8 something else?

9 MR. LANGAN: Yeah. We -- you know, in
10 terms of -- you know, and Tom is talking about the
11 different factors, so let's take one factor:
12 Wetlands. What are the impacts to wetlands along
13 each route? There can be an acreage figure
14 associated with that. And so one route may have X
15 number of wetland acres affected, another might have
16 Y number of acres affected.

17 So, yes, as part of our review, as part
18 of the environmental impact statement we'll reverify
19 all of the data that Xcel has provided to us so,
20 yeah, hopefully that example is illustrative of what
21 we'll do in terms of that. What we're also looking
22 at, you know, policy and local land use and zoning
23 and zoning compatibility, things like this. So it's
24 not all numerical, if you will. But we do look
25 at -- we do look at numbers, yes.

1 MR. LYSTROM: Okay. The last question is
2 on people who have property that is affected, what
3 I've been told--and you already answered that you
4 don't know the answer--but I guess I wanted to get
5 it on the record, is I was told that if the
6 landowner and the utility could not come up with
7 a -- an agreement, the utility would have to -- or
8 there's -- there is a possibility of it being
9 bought. Do you know anything about that?

10 MR. HILLSTROM: Yes, indeed. And that is
11 right. If the landowner chooses to do so, the
12 landowner can ask the utility to buy the entire
13 parcel. If you're not happy with the project, if
14 you're not happy with the line or the compensation
15 that you get, that is an option. It's known as a
16 buy-the-farm law or the buy-the-farm provision.

17 And as long as I have the microphone
18 here, I wanted to go back to your first question
19 about the structure heights. I just wanted to
20 clarify that the numbers that I gave you are for the
21 345 line. And now for the 161 line the towers would
22 be shorter, they would be about 80 feet tall with a
23 span of near 500 feet between them. So the lower
24 voltage lines have smaller structures.

25

1 MR. LYSTROM: And the last thing I would
2 like to do is make adjust a statement. I bought
3 this property to -- as an investment to possibly
4 retire to, a relaxation location, and I think that
5 the viewing of 100-plus-foot structure at the back
6 of the property would drastically reduce the value,
7 especially in my eyes. Thank you.

8 MR. LANGAN: Okay, thank you.

9 Okay. Yeah, please come up. I thought I
10 saw a hand in the back of the room.

11 MS. HELLER: Betsy Heller, H-E-L-L-E-R.
12 Is there any -- are there any reports yet on
13 medical? If this goes on our route, it's going to
14 be basically on our porch. And are there any
15 medical reports saying how far you need to be away
16 from this?

17 MR. LANGAN: That is something that we
18 will study and provide information for in our
19 environmental document. Any potential public health
20 effects associated with that, with the transmission
21 line. The World Health Organization has done
22 studies on this, the Minnesota Department of Health
23 has done studies on this. There are studies within
24 the five-state region that we draw information from.
25 It is something that's been studied over a number of

1 years, and some of those studies have been completed
2 recently, as well. So it's not 30- and 40-year-old
3 studies that we're looking at.

4 But what we do is we look for the
5 available information that's out there, reputable
6 organizations that put together this information,
7 and then we supply that documentation in the
8 environmental impact statement.

9 MS. HELLER: And if our house is deemed
10 to be moved, is that part of the compensation? I
11 think you referenced it in your part of the
12 presentation.

13 MR. LANGAN: Tom, would you take that?

14 MR. HILLSTROM: Yeah, as the project has
15 been developed, we've done enough preliminary
16 engineering to know that the routes can be built as
17 they're shown on maps without having to remove any
18 homes. So we don't plan on removing any homes.

19 MR. HELLER: There's not 80 feet between
20 those two buildings.

21 MS. HELLER: I'll make you dinner. Come
22 on over. Actually, you made my day. I want to move
23 to California, but he's not shooting for that.

24 I just -- really, we are right on the
25 road. Literally ten steps to the road.

1 MR. HILLSTROM: Maybe afterwards you can
2 show me exactly where you live. But in some of
3 those cases there is a house very near the road, and
4 if the other side of the road is less --

5 MR. HELLER: Not there, you picked the
6 wrong spot.

7 MS. HELLER: Across the street is five
8 steps to the road and we have ten and I think we're
9 the preferred.

10 MR. HILLSTROM: Maybe after the formal
11 part of the meeting here you can show me on the map
12 exactly where you're talking about.

13 MR. LANGAN: Yes. Please, right here.

14 I'm sorry, you in the back, you'll get to
15 go next. I'm sorry I missed you.

16 MS. LOGAN: I'm short.

17 MR. LANGAN: Me too.

18 MS. MANCILMAN: Can you hear me now?
19 Okay. I'm Vicki Mancilman, M-A-N-C-I-L-M-A-N. And
20 it's probably going to be kind of what Betsy was
21 talking about. When we were talking with you, you
22 said that the voltage could affect our electric
23 fences. And if it affects your electric fences how
24 far away do our homes have to be not to affect us?
25 And also, if there was humming from them also, which

1 is okay, but how far away -- how far away is the
2 humming going to be?

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We can't hear you.

4 MS. MANCILMAN: Can't hear me?

5 MR. LANGAN: We can. The answer to that
6 is we will take any noise affects, we will talk
7 about the noise that is associated with these
8 transmission projects, we will talk about -- we will
9 look into various -- how far the line comes from
10 homes -- comes from homes and at what distances. So
11 how many homes are within 100 feet, how many homes
12 within 200 feet. And so we'll analyze that and then
13 we'll suit the review, and based on the reports and
14 the information that's out, there we'll be able to
15 talk about the anticipated effects at certain
16 distances from the line. If that's answering your
17 question?

18 MS. MANCILMAN: Yep. So then will we get
19 copies of all this also --

20 MR. LANGAN: Yes.

21 MS. MANCILMAN: -- so that we know?

22 MR. LANGAN: Yes. Thank you. Excellent.
23 As part of the environmental impact statement we'll
24 have a bibliography that will cite all of the
25 studies that we use in our valuation, all of the

1 available information that's out there. We
2 aren't -- we don't intend to take the entire World
3 Health Organization study and put it into our
4 document. We will take the pertinent information
5 and include it in the main document. But we will
6 have a bibliography and a reference so that you can
7 go out and read that information for yourself,
8 access that at the library or online and take a look
9 at those studies that we use to develop our
10 information on the project.

11
12 MS. MANCILMAN: Okay.

13 MR. LANGAN: Okay.

14 MS. MANCILMAN: Thank you.

15 MR. LANGAN: Thank you.

16 And please. Thank you for being patient.

17 MS. LOGAN: Thank you. My name is Erin
18 Logan. E-R-I-N, L-O-G-A-N. I apologize for my
19 elementary questions, but this is my first meeting.
20 And it sounds like it's a public information
21 meeting. So I'm just kind of looking for some
22 information.

23 I read through the packet and it explains
24 that the purpose of the project is to improve
25 reliability, help meet increased demand, and then

1 tap into the vast wind resources in the area. So I
2 have two questions. My first is: Of those three
3 things, which is actually the higher priority that's
4 driving the project? Because it appears that we
5 have other major corridors in place between the
6 Twin Cities and La Crosse and they're not being
7 used. So I'm just kind of curious about that.

8 And then the second question: Are your
9 substations sized specifically to accommodate all
10 the wind projects that are in the MISO queue? Or
11 when these wind projects come forward will you need
12 to increase the size of the substations?

13 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Tom.

14 MR. HILLSTROM: The first question about
15 the priorities for the need, the number one priority
16 for the need is load serving to the city and the
17 area around Rochester and, again, the city and the
18 area around La Crosse and Winona. Those two areas
19 have been growing over the last 20 to 30 years. The
20 population and electrical demand in those cities
21 have grown. And in order to reliably serve that
22 electric need, there needs to be more supply to
23 those areas. And that's the number one priority for
24 this project.

25 The other elements of the need, regional

1 reliability of the overall transmission system is
2 there, and you're right about that. And also, the
3 need to incorporate more renewable energy onto the
4 grid is the third reason.

5 I started off this evening talking about
6 the wind developments and how we don't really have a
7 direct connection with those wind developments. And
8 again, this project was designed without any
9 specific wind development in mind. Our substation
10 is sized in a manner to handle our project. And we
11 usually buy a piece of land that is suited to expand
12 that substation. And I don't know of any plans to
13 expand the substation beyond what we're designing it
14 for.

15 But like everything else, things change
16 and, you know, more things happen that we can't
17 foresee. And you know, the area in the substation
18 and around it may be expanded, but I don't have any
19 information on imminent projects that would do that.

20 But that's not to say that these wind
21 developments won't tap into the substation that we
22 build because that -- that is likely what they would
23 have to do. If you build a big new wind farm, you
24 have to connect that wind farm into the system
25 through a substation. So the substations that we

1 build may be used to connect the wind development
2 into the system.

3 Yes, please, in the back.

4 MS. WHEATLEY: Chris Wheatley,
5 W-H-E-A-T-L-E-Y. My question has to do with the
6 question that was just asked. Who in the State of
7 Minnesota is responsible for figuring out, when
8 somebody puts in an alternative energy like wind
9 energy or like when a grid comes through, who
10 decides the overall plan of where energy is needed
11 and how do they go about allocating that? Do the
12 corporations come to us and say we think you need
13 power here? Or does the Department of Energy say,
14 well, we think we need power there, so let's
15 contract it out?

16 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Okay. Tom, do you
17 have anyone here that can speak about MISO?

18 MR. HILLSTROM: Hum.

19 MR. LANGAN: It's --

20 MR. HILLSTROM: Let me take a little
21 survey of somebody who might, see if I can find
22 something.

23 MR. LANGAN: We're going to do our best
24 to get you an answer to that. And once we locate
25 somebody, we'll address that question.

1 Just real quickly, MISO is the Midwest
2 Independent System Operators and it is an
3 organization that oversees just what the question
4 was about here.

5 MR. HILLSTROM: Grant is willing to take
6 a stab at that.

7 MR. STEVENSON: Okay. I was helping
8 somebody at a map on the back, so could you repeat
9 the question? Sorry to make you walk all this way.
10 I'll meet you -- I'll be Phil Donahue.

11 MS. WHEATLEY: All right.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You look like
13 Phil.

14 MS. WHEATLEY: In a nutshell, I want to
15 know, for the State of Minnesota, the Department of
16 Energy, who looks out for who? Like does the power
17 company come to the State of Minnesota and say, you
18 know, we think that you might need power at A, B,
19 and C location and we would like to put that up, and
20 then the wind energy from who knows where comes and
21 says we would like to put wind energy up because we
22 think you could benefit for this.

23 But I think -- you know, I feel like
24 there's no overall plan about how to connect all
25 these grids together. And I would just think that

1 the State of Minnesota, or any state, would have an
2 overall energy plan to decide what the state needs
3 where and how they're going to do it and who they're
4 going to allocate it to. Just like, you know, like
5 the federal government puts out bids and we get bids
6 in. So does the state do that, too? That's what I
7 want to know.

8 MR. STEVENSON: So you ask -- we're going
9 to have to tag team this one. It's a very
10 complicated issue. If someone wants to develop wind
11 energy, who's managing that? Well, part of the
12 answer is the legislature mandated our no binary
13 standard. And the renewable -- the type of
14 generation that is proven to be most viable is wind.

15 So the utilities are obligated to buy the
16 energy. We're not obligated to build the wind power
17 plants. So what the utilities have mostly elected
18 to do is to buy the power from another corporation.
19 Now, very recently Xcel Energy, we bought our first
20 wind power plant. But most of the wind that is on
21 our system, we just purchase the energy.

22 So when there's developers, large
23 developers and small developers that are out trying
24 to find the best wind and put their business deal
25 together, and they'll negotiate with one or more

1 utilities to buy the power. But to connect to the
2 transmission system, that's when they have to apply
3 to MISO, the Midwest ISO, and they are an
4 organization that manages the multistate
5 transmission grids.

6 Does that start to get -- I can't answer
7 the state energy policy one.

8 MS. WHEATLEY: Right. And that's what I
9 mean. I mean, I understand the part where, you
10 know, Xcel Energy or something is to determine need
11 and -- but I don't understand where the Department
12 of Energy falls in this above -- above all of this.
13 Like -- seems like, to me, the Department of Energy,
14 they know they're growing communities already, they
15 know they need power. It seems like they should be
16 a little bit more in control of the situation.

17 MR. STEVENSON: There's multiple parts to
18 that question. The -- if you're asking about local
19 electric reliability, not what source is the power,
20 but the local reliability is the obligation of the
21 utility. And we have different reliability
22 requirements from governments to help judge that
23 part. But I --

24 MS. DEBLEECKERE: IRP.

25 MR. STEVENSON: Okay. I'm going to give

1 the microphone back to Matt.

2 MR. LANGAN: We also, in our office --
3 and this is just as Grant had put it, the question
4 you're asking is a complex one and there are many
5 different components to it. MISO plays a role, the
6 utility providers play a role of identifying where
7 that reliability needs to exist, where the demand is
8 increasing, or where that is. Okay?

9 When -- one other part of that is when an
10 independent wind farm is proposed, our office does
11 review that proposal. And they have to seek a
12 permit through our office to get approval for
13 that -- for that wind farm.

14 MS. WHEATLEY: They get approval just for
15 the wind farm? Does the Department of Energy also
16 say okay now?

17 MR. MATTOX: I'm very sorry. We'll have
18 to ask you to come up again. We can't hear.

19 MS WHEATLEY: So what I don't -- whether
20 it's electrical grids or wind energy or water power
21 or solar power, does the Department of Energy, when
22 they look at these different places around the state
23 of Minnesota, whether they're going to be
24 transmitted through Minnesota or go to a local, do
25 they look at the overall scheme of things, instead

1 of saying I'm going to grant this, you know, this X
2 amount of windmills here, this X amount? Like how
3 they're all going to be coordinated, how they're
4 going to contribute to the grid, like -- so you
5 build these things, now you have to get somebody
6 else to come in and transport the electricity.

7 I just think that the State of Minnesota,
8 or any state, or the U.S., as far as that goes,
9 should have a much more broader viewpoint than what
10 I feel like is happening. This little segment works
11 over here, this little segment works over here. I
12 just think it should be a lot more coordinated.
13 We're sophisticated enough to do that. We have
14 computers, we can do that.

15 MR. LANGAN: And thank you. Sorry to
16 make you ask that question three times in three
17 different ways. Thank you. And it is a complex
18 answer. We do have integrated resource plans where
19 utilities will give a forecast of the need and what,
20 you know, you're talking about, both the power
21 generating portions of it and then the transmission
22 and distribution of that power. And so we do
23 have -- they do submit long-range plans that are
24 reviewed by the state and the Public Utility
25 Commission. And so there is that type of thinking.

1 So there is that long-range thinking.
2 And the utilities do that, you know, on an
3 individual basis, I guess. So Xcel Energy would
4 submit one, Minnesota Power up north would submit
5 one. And so there is that long range, holistic
6 thinking out for a period of time in those -- in
7 those resource plans that we receive.

8 Let's bring you up, since we're having
9 this conversation here.

10 MS. WHEATLEY: Here I thought I had a
11 loud voice.

12 So when you do your long-range thinking,
13 do states talk to other states? Because power, you
14 know, is transient, I mean, it's kinetic, it doesn't
15 stay still. So at what point do you start talking
16 about the Dakotas or Wisconsin or any of those for
17 your long-range plan?

18 MR. LANGAN: We do -- we do consider
19 that. And here, I'll bring Tricia up.

20 But a lot of how we have structured
21 our -- boy, it is loud over here. Sorry you're in
22 the corner. How we have structured our -- our
23 approval process, it coincides with the work that's
24 done in the region. So, yes, there's a lot of
25 communication back and forth between states.

1 Tricia, anything you want to add?

2 MS. DEBLEECKERE: Pretty much like what I
3 said before. I'm sorry you're getting tossed around
4 to a few different people here, but you kind of hit
5 the routing group, when that's more of a policy and
6 planning question. But I -- there's people at my
7 agency that deal with this issue and the long-range
8 planning. And if you want additional -- you know,
9 there's lots of plans I can refer you to. So if you
10 want more information, I can get that to you, you
11 know, after the meeting. Or if anyone is
12 interested, you know, I can get some information to
13 Matt to provide to anybody.

14 MR. LANGAN: Okay. Yes, sir.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You have to bring
16 the mic over here. He can't walk.

17 MR. TIEDEMAN: Gerald Tiedeman. Our
18 local township, Section 10. I got my
19 granddaughter's living with me and she has three
20 sons that love to hunt. And I know they're going to
21 be hunting along that line because that line runs
22 right along our north boundary. Besides that we
23 have a lot of cattle. Fence -- it's fenced up there
24 and the cattle graze along that line and on that
25 field.

1 So -- but I have another suggestion I
2 would like to make. And that is why don't you check
3 with the Minnesota Department of Transportation and
4 whoever is heading up this high speed rail line
5 going down to La Crosse and from what is it?
6 Hampton?

7 MR. LANGAN: Um-hum.

8 MR. TIEDEMAN: From there over to the
9 Mississippi River wouldn't be very far. And, well,
10 when they get the right-of-way bought for a new line
11 or whatever they're going to put it on, go right
12 down that line with them. Get down to Alma,
13 Wisconsin, you hook on to the Northern States Power
14 line to run the electricity into Rochester. And I
15 think it would be a lot cheaper route than what
16 you're planning to go, through all this area.

17 MR. LANGAN: Thank you for that comment.

18 Okay. Other questions or comments? Yes,
19 please.

20 MR. BREIE: My name is Ron Breie. And a
21 direct question that I haven't heard anything about
22 at all, and that's basically, like, cell phone
23 service and internet service. I've got -- my
24 internet service comes off a tower to my place and
25 it's going to run right, you know, perpendicular to

1 that line almost. And is that going to affect it?
2 And if so, do we get compensated for it, and how do
3 we get compensated for it?

4 MR. LANGAN: Thank you for that question.
5 Any potential interference in association with the
6 line will be evaluated in their environmental
7 document. That is one of the pieces and -- one of
8 the pieces I didn't read off as I was kind of
9 checking through the list there. But that is --
10 that is an issue we will look at. If there is any
11 interference, any radio or TV interference along the
12 route, we would -- we would look at. And there
13 is -- there are regulations that oversee any
14 interference there. I think it's FCC will have
15 access to our document and can provide us that
16 information there, if there would be any
17 interference.

18 We did have that question, actually,
19 today. And, Tom, did you want to provide any
20 additional information on that?

21 MR. HILLSTROM: Sure. We, as the
22 utilities, have a lot of experience in this. We
23 have lots of power lines all over the state. And
24 there's very little chance of interference from --
25 in cell phone or any other kind of radio or

1 television or any kind of communication
2 interference. The -- the way that the line could
3 interfere is if the structure were placed directly
4 between the receiver and the transmitter.

5 So it's physical obstruction of the
6 tower. And being that these are single pole
7 structures for the most part, placed 1,000 feet
8 apart, the likelihood of any significant
9 interference is pretty small. And again, this is a
10 policy of the utilities that if our project results
11 in a problem in any respect on your land or your
12 reception, we'll fix it. The utility has a long
13 commitment of fixing any problems that it creates.
14 And you have our commitment that if our project
15 creates a problem, we'll fix it.

16 MR. LANGAN: Any other questions or
17 comments?

18 Okay. Seeing that there are none, we
19 will be available for awhile after the meeting. We
20 do have the maps in back. We do still have the
21 computer up back here, if you would like to print
22 out a map for use in your comments, or just for your
23 own use.

24 I -- I want to thank everybody for being
25 here tonight and asking your questions and providing

1 us your comments.

2 Again, we do accept written comments.
3 They are due to me by 4:30 p.m. on May 20th. So
4 couple weeks from now. I encourage you to send
5 those comments in, if you have them. And thank you
6 very much for being here tonight.

7 (Hearing adjourned at 8:42 p.m.)

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1 STATE OF MINNESOTA) .
2) ss.
3 COUNTY OF DAKOTA)

4
5
6 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE
7

8
9 I, Janice Dickman, do hereby certify that
10 the above and foregoing transcript, consisting of
11 the preceding 47 pages, is a correct transcript of
12 my stenographic notes, and is a full, true and
13 complete transcript of the proceedings to the best
14 of my ability.

15 Dated: May 14, 2010
16

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20 _____
21 Janice Dickman, RPR
22 Court Reporter
23
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25